

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 025041

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MX, US

SUBJECT: MEXICALI SEWAGE PROBLEM

REF: MEXICO 0850, JANUARY 2,

1. IN VIEW OF EMBASSY'S PESSIMISM WITH REGARD TO AWAITED RESPONSE FROM GOM ON MEXICALI SEWAGE PROBLEM DEPARTMENT CONCERNED THAT IT MIGHT BE MORE DIFFICULT TO ATTEMPT LATER TO COUNTERACT AN UNSATISFACTORY REPLY THAN TO ATTEMPT AT THIS STAGE TO FORESTALL ONE. SINCE NEW FONSEC IS PRESUMABLY UNFAMILIAR WITH IMPORTANCE OF PROBLEM, HE MIGHT, IF NOT CAUTIONED, APPROVE A REPLY WITHOUT FULLY REALIZING ITS POSSIBLE INADEQUACY OR ITS DISREGARD OF A SPECIFIC COMMITMENT ON THE PART OF HIS PREDECESSOR. WE ARE APPREHENSIVE THAT IN RABASA'S RESIGNATION WE MAY HAVE LOST A POSSIBLY SYMPATHETIC VOICE THAT SEEMED RESPONSIVE TO THE PROBLEM AND THAT AT LEAST WAS AWARE OF ITS CONNECTION WITH THE SALINITY

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SETTLEMENT. WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO RAISE

THE PROBLEM WITH THE FONSEC AT AN EARLY DATE SO THAT WHEN HE IS CONFRONTED WITH A PROPOSED REPLY, HE WOULD REVIEW IT AS NEARLY AS PRACTICABLE AS WE HOPED RABASA WOULD REVIEW IT. IF THE EMBASSY SEES MERIT IN THESE TACTICS, WE SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING POINTS MIGHT BE MADE ORALLY TO THE FONSEC.

2. THIS IS A MAJOR PROBLEM THAT HAS PERSISTED FOR MORE THAN TWENTY-FIVE YEARS. ALTHOUGH MEXICO HAS NEVER QUESTIONED ITS RESPONSIBILITY AND HAS REPEATEDLY ASSURED THE US OF ITS INTENTION TO PROVIDE A SOLUTION, IT HAS NOT CORRECTED THE PROBLEM, AND TODAY THE PROBLEM IS IN SOME RESPECTS MORE SERIOUS THAN IT WAS WHEN THE QUESTION WAS FIRST RAISED. UNQUESTIONABLY THE EXPLANATION FOR MEXICO'S DIFFICULTY IS THE EXTRAORDINARY GROWTH OF POPULATION IN THE CITY OF MEXICALI, BUT THE IMMEDIATE SOLUTION APPEARS EQUALLY SIMPLE. THE IMMEDIATE NEED IS TO STOP ALL RAW SEWAGE FROM MEXICALI CROSSING THE INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY INTO THE UNITED STATES. FOR A PERMANENT SOLUTION TO THE MEXICALI PROBLEM, WE WISH TO MENTION THE POSSIBILITY ALSO DISCUSSED AT THE TECHNICAL LEVEL BY THE TWO COMMISSIONERS ON IBWC, THAT ALL SEWAGE AND OTHER WASTE WATERS BE DIRECTED SOUTHWARD FOR USE ON IRRIGATED LANDS OR FOR DISCHARGE TO THE GULF OF CALIFORNIA.

3. LIKE THE COLORADO RIVER SALINITY PROBLEM, THE MATTER IS NOW MUCH TOO SERIOUS TO BE LEFT TO TECHNICIANS. IT IS AN URGENT INTERNATIONAL PROBLEM, AND THE FOREIGN OFFICE SHOULD INSIST THAT IT BE DEALT WITH IN AN URGENT AND THOROUGH MANNER. SECRETARY RABASA RECOGNIZED ITS IMPORT IN THE SALINITY NEGOTIATIONS, AND RATHER THAN HAVE THE MEXICALI PROBLEM PLAY A PART IN THOSE NEGOTIATIONS, HE PROMISED THAT IT WOULD BE SEPARATELY CORRECTED. (REF NOTE DELIVERED SEPTEMBER 12, 1975.)

4. BOTH GOVERNMENTS MUST ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT THEY CANNOT PUBLICLY PROFESS THE INTEREST THEY DO IN THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND AT THE SAME TIME PERMIT A SPECIFIC, OBVIOUSLY HAZARDOUS SITUATION LIKE THAT AT MEXICALI TO PERSIST. FOR THIS REASON THE US, IN ITS NOTE OF SEPTEMBER 12, 1975, EVEN SUGGESTED THE POSSIBILITY OF SOME ASSIST-
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ANCE TO MEXICO THROUGH A JOINT PROJECT OF SOME SORT. THE UNITED STATES HAS NO WISH TO PRESS ASSISTANCE ON MEXICO AND WOULD PREFER THAT MEXICO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM INDEPENDENTLY, BUT THIS HAS NOT BEEN DONE, AND THE PEOPLE OF CALIFORNIA WHO MUST RECEIVE THE UNTREATED MEXICALI SEWAGE CANNOT UNDERSTAND WHY. THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA IS MOST DISSATISFIED WITH THE LENGTH OF TIME THE GOVERNMENTS HAVE LEFT THE PROBLEM UNRESOLVED AT THE PREJUDICE OF ITS HEALTH

AND ENVIRONMENT. CALIFORNIA'S CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION
IS CERTAIN TO RAISE THE PROBLEM PUBLICLY IF IT IS NOT
QUICKLY REMOVED. IN THE INTERESTS OF GOOD RELATIONS, WE
WISH TO AVOID THIS.

5. FYI - MOST IMPORTANT POINT IS TO SEEK COMMITMENT TO
STOP THE DISCHARGE OF ALL RAW SEWAGE ACROSS THE BOUNDARY
IN 1976. END FYI. INGERSOLL

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